

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

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DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:JELEADER:AM

APPROVED BY NEA/INS:DKUX

CU/YSS:HELAM

CU/NEA:JSABA

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P 131729Z JUL 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, CE

SUBJECT: AFS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

REF: COLOMBO 1834, 1928

1. DEPARTMENT HAS TALKED WITH AFS OFFICIAL (ALICE GERLACH) REGARDING SELVRATNAM PROBLEM. AFS DOES NOT CONSIDER IT POSSIBLE EITHER PRACTICALLY OR IN PRINCIPAL TO EXTEND GRANT. AFS REASONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. AFS SRI LANKA PROGRAM BUDGETED ONE YEAR IN ADVANCE TO COVER 10 PARTICIPANTS, ALTHOUGH LOCAL AFS BOARD IS INSTRUCTED TO MAKE PRELIMINARY SELECTION OF 16 FINALISTS. THIS IS MAXIMUM POSSIBLE FOR SRI LANKA PROGRAM WHICH IS VERY EXPENSIVE DUE TO VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF FINANCING FROM PARTICIPANT PARENTS BECAUSE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESTRICTIONS. (PARENTS DO CONTRIBUTE SMALL AMOUNT RUPEES TO AFS ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS COLOMBO.)

B. THERE IS NO AFS BUDGETARY FLEXIBILITY FOR ADDING 11TH PARTICIPANT. ADDITION OF SELVRATNAM WOULD MEAN SUBTRACTION OF ONE OR EVEN TWO LOWER COST SCHOLARSHIPS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, STEP AFS IS NOT WILLING TO CONSIDER.

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GERLACH NOTED DROP IN SIZE AFS PROGRAM FROM OVER
3,000 IN 1966-67 TO 2,600 IN 74-75 DUE TO BUDGET
SQUEEZE.

2. WE MADE STRONG ARGUMENT FOR LONG-TERM VALUE TO
BOTH USG AND AFS PROGRAM OF EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE
SELVARATNAM. ANSWER WAS A COURTEOUS BUT VERY FIRM
"NO." AFS POINTED OUT ITS AWARENESS THAT NIECE OF
PRIME MINISTER ALSO WAS TURNED DOWN ON MEDICAL GROUNDS.

3. VIEWED FROM WASHINGTON PERSPECTIVE, BEST WE CAN
SUGGEST IS THAT YOU TELL SENANAYAKES THAT SELVARATNAM
WAS EXCELLENT CANDIDATE BUT COULD NOT BE PLACED THIS
YEAR BECAUSE OF SEVERE BUDGET AND PLACEMENT STRICTURES OF
AFS. YOU CAN EMPHASIZE THAT AFS IS PRIVATE ORGANIZATION
OVER WHICH USG HAS VIRTUALLY NO LEVERAGE. (FYI: CU
CONTRIBUTION TO AFS BUDGET IS ONLY 2.8.) WE WOULD
NEVERTHELESS THINK HE WOULD STAND GOOD CHANCE NEXT YEAR.
(WE HAVE NOT RPT NOT DISCUSSED THIS POSSIBILITY WITH
AFS, BUT WILL DO SO NEXT WEEK.) KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE151976
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JELEADER:AM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740188-0382
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740751/aaaabrbu.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: COLOMBO 1834, 1928
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 AUG 2002 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
TAGS: OEXC, CE
To: COLOMBO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005